

Translation Note  
JP2002-251497

The term ‘白票’ (literally, ‘white ballot’) which is used in paragraph 0044 and thereafter has been translated as ‘blank ballot’. However, the term may be misleading to someone not familiar with Japanese voting methods.

My understanding of the Japanese voting system is rudimentary. The main purpose of this translation note is to inform the reader that a ‘blank vote’ as referred to in paragraph 0044 and thereafter is not an ‘invalid’ or ‘useless’ vote.

My understanding of the use of the term is as follows, but please note that I am not an expert on Japanese politics.

When used to describe voting by citizens in a restricted list proportional representation election, the term describes the second step of a two-step process.

In the first step the voter chooses the political party to vote for, and when these votes are tabulated, seats in the Diet are assigned to the political parties in proportion to the votes received. In the second step of the process, the voter then votes for a specific candidate belonging to the selected party, or can choose to cast a ‘blank vote’ (indicating “I don’t care who the candidate is, as long as they belong to the party I previously chose”).

When the seats are assigned proportionately, and for example when party X is allocated 3 seats, those 3 seats are awarded to the top 3 vote-getters from that party.

When used to describe voting by Japanese politicians in Diet proceedings, a ‘白票’ truly is a ‘white ballot’, which indicates a “Yes” vote, as opposed to a ‘青票’ (blue ballot) indicating a “No” vote.